DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 105 CS 004 593

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TITLE The Effects of Miscue Analysis Instruction on Judgments of Seriousness of Oral Reading Errors.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference (28th, St. Petersburg Beach, Florida, November 30-December 2, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; *Error Analysis (Language); Higher Education; Linguistics; *Miscue Analysis; Preservice Education; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Research; Summative Evaluation; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

To determine whether miscue analysis instruction changed their perceptions of the seriousness of certain kinds of errors in children's oral reading, 60 undergraduate and graduate students were given an error survey to complete before and after being given such instruction. Each of the 32 items of the survey consisted of a pair of sentences, with children's oral reading errors marked. Students were instructed to choose the sentence with the most serious error. Items were selected according to whether the errors were graphically similar to or different from the text, semantically normal or odd, syntactically normal or odd, with or without meaning change, and a dialect variation or not. Results indicated that meaning change was a crucial factor in students' judgments of error seriousness both before and after miscue analysis instruction. However, instruction did appear to affect the way students viewed the seriousness of certain kinds of errors; in particular, dialect variations were viewed as less serious than other errors. (FL)

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The Effects of Miscue Analysis Instruction On Judgments of Seriousness of Oral Reading Errors

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Since it is often the case that teachers' attitudes influence their behavior in the classroom, the assessment of those attitudes is an important area for investigation. In the elementary school, a considerable amount of time is spent in having children read orally. Therefore it would seem that teachers' attitudes toward the kinds of errors children produce may make an important difference in the classroom, and a number of studies have investigated teachers' attitudes toward dialect variations (K. Goodman & Buck, 1973; Simons & Johnson, 1974; Cunningham, 1975, 1976-77; Ramig & Granger, 1978).

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During the teaching of an interdisciplinary course in Linguistics and Reading, in which miscue analysis (Y. Goodman & Burke, 1972) was a pivotal content, it seemed that one effect of miscue analysis instruction was that students' attitudes changed toward children's oral reading errors. In particular, it seemed that students viewed the graphic similarity of a miscue to the text as less important in judging the seriousness of an error, and the meaning constancy and semantic/syntactic appropriateness as more important. In order to test this idea, we gave an "error survey" to students before and after they were given instruction in miscue analysis.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 60 upper-level undergraduate and graduate students (50 females, 10 males) in a course in Linguistics and Reading.

Error Survey

The error survey had 32 items, each consisting of a pair of sentences with children's oral reading errors marked. Students were instructed to choose the sentence with the more serious error for each pair.

In selecting items for the survey, we used an analysis of oral reading errors derived from Goodman and Burke's Reading Miscue Inventory (1972). Thus each reading error in the survey was categorized as being graphically similar to or different from the text, syntactically normal or odd, semantically normal or odd, with or without meaning change from the text, and a dialect variation or not. On the basis of this analysis, oral reading errors for the survey were

chosen which would allow us to compare the effects of graphic similarity with the effects of semantic and syntactic normality, dialect variation, and meaning change in the subjects' judgments of error seriousness. Table 1 shows the criteria used for formulating each of nine categories and gives examples of the categories.

Insert Table 1 about here

Items were constructed in the following way:

(1) Dialect variations of the text were compared with errors which were graphically similar to the text, but which showed a meaning change. (The dialect variation could be either graphically similar to or different from the text. Sentences with meaning change were variable as to semantic/syntactic normality.) Thus the comparisons were Category 1 vs. Categories 9, 8, and 6, Category 2 vs. Category 6, and Category 3 vs. Category 9. (Of course, not every possible pairing of the nine categories was included on the survey, since the length of the task had to be reasonable. Therefore, only those pairings which seemed to provide the most crucial information were used.)

(2) Errors which were graphically different from the text but which were semantically/syntactically normal and showed no meaning change were compared with errors which were graphically similar to the text, but did show a meaning change. Again, sentences with meaning change were variable as to semantic/syntactic normality. Thus the comparisons were Category 4 vs. Categories 9, 8, and 6.

(3) Errors which were graphically different from the text and

showed a meaning change, although they were semantically and syntactically normal, were compared with graphically similar errors which were syntactically and/or semantically odd, in addition to showing meaning change. Thus the comparisons were Category 7 vs. Categories 8 and 9.

(4) Multiple errors or insertions which were semantically/syntactically normal and showed no meaning change were compared with graphically similar errors which were semantically/syntactically odd, and did show a meaning change. Thus the comparison was Category 5 vs. Category 9.

Findings

Differences is judgments concerning degree of seriousness before and after miscue analysis instruction are presented in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Analysis of variance, using a repeated measures design (Winer, 1971), showed that Category 1 choices decreased significantly ($F = 5.55$, $p < .05$) when paired with Category 8, Category 3 choices decreased significantly ($F = 9.09$, $p < .005$) when paired with Category 9, Category 2 choices decreased significantly ($F = 7.01$, $p < .05$) when paired with Category 6, and Category 5 choices decreased significantly ($F = 4.84$, $p < .05$) when paired with Category 9. Other pair comparisons were not significantly different.

Discussion

The findings of this study show the instruction in miscue

analysis did change students' perceptions of the seriousness of certain kinds of oral reading errors. In particular, errors which were dialect variations of the text were perceived as less serious after miscue analysis instruction. Even before miscue analysis, any error which changed the meaning of the text was viewed as more serious than a dialect variation (which, by definition, does not change meaning). After miscue analysis instruction, this tendency was even stronger. (In three of the five category comparisons involving dialect variation, the change was statistically significant.)

The students in this study seemed to be especially sensitive to meaning change as a crucial factor in their judgments of the seriousness of errors. When any category which involved meaning change was compared with any category which had no meaning change, items in the meaning change category were judged as more serious - at least 80% of the time before miscue instruction, and at least 90% of the time after miscue instruction. However, if both categories in the pair contained meaning change, then it seemed that miscue instruction made no difference in judgments of error seriousness. The role of graphic, semantic, and syntactic structures, as opposed to meaning change, is thus unclear. Semantically and syntactically odd errors were judged as better than semantically/syntactically normal errors if the odd errors were graphically similar to the text (Category 9 vs. 7). But sentences which were normal in syntax and semantics were judged as better than sentences which were semantically odd (although syntactically normal) if the normal sentences were graphically different (Category 7 vs. 8). These results, which were the same both

before and after miscue instruction, seem contradictory and warrant further research.

We were surprised by the fact that before miscue instruction students were not as strongly influenced by graphic similarities between text and error as we had expected. Perhaps these students were linguistically more sophisticated precisely because they chose to enroll in an elective course called Linguistics and Reading. But it appears that instruction in miscue analysis did affect the way these students viewed the seriousness of certain kinds of oral reading errors. In particular, students viewed miscues which were dialect variations of the texts as less serious than other types. The translation of a text word or phrase into a dialect equivalent implies the comprehension of the text material. If comprehension is seen as the most important goal of reading instruction, then this change in attitude is certainly a desirable one.

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Table 1 Criteria and Examples for the Categories

Category	Criteria for Each Category: Error Comparison With Text					
	Graphically	Semantically	Syntactically	Meaning	Dialect Variation	Other
1	different	-	-	same	yes	
2	similar	-	-	same	yes	
3	-	-	-	same	yes	multiple error, insertion, or omission
4	different	normal	normal	same	no	
5	-	normal	normal	same	no	multiple error or insertion
6	similar	normal	normal	change	no	
7	different	normal	normal	change	no	
8	similar	odd	normal	change	no	
9	similar	odd	odd	change	no	

Examples of the Categories

Category	
1	Charles and Michael are (they) out playing.
2	The farmer who had stolen the meat said to himself (hisself), "...
3	For the last few minutes I (have) been trying to remember something. (∅ = word omitted)
4	One day a small (little) deer wanted to go to the other side of the river.
5	He went to his drawer and ∧got ∧all the money he had. (he, out)
6	Behind him he heard shots (shouts) and the high wild yelling of the young man.
7	The next day, the Tigers were very excited. (upset)
8	If he was injured it was his own concern. (concert)
9	Send Dog at once before we die of hunger. (hanger)

Table 2 Percentage of Choices of Errors Viewed as More Serious Within Each Category Comparison for Pre-Test and Post-Test

Category Comparison	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Category Comparison	Pre-Test	Post-Test
1 vs. 9	15.00 85.00	8.33 91.67	4 vs. 9	9.17 90.83	3.33 96.67
* 1 vs. 8	20.00 80.00	8.33 91.67	4 vs. 8	5.83 94.17	4.17 95.83
1 vs. 6	10.00 90.00	5.83 94.17	4 vs. 6	11.67 88.33	9.17 90.83
* 3 vs. 9	19.58 80.42	8.33 91.67	* 5 vs. 9	11.67 88.33	3.96 96.04
* 2 vs. 6	15.00 85.00	5.42 94.58	7 vs. 8	41.04 58.96	40.42 59.58
			9 vs. 7	36.25 63.75	37.92 62.08

* indicates significant change between pre-test and post-test

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Abstract

Sixty upper-level undergraduate and graduate students in an interdisciplinary course in Linguistics and Reading were given an error survey to complete before and after being given instruction in miscue analysis. Each of the 32 items of the error survey consisted of a pair of sentences, with children's oral reading errors marked. Students were instructed to choose the sentence with the more serious error for each pair. Items were selected according to whether they were graphically similar to or different from the text, semantically normal or odd, syntactically normal or odd, with or without meaning change, and a dialect variation or not. Differences in judgments concerning degree of seriousness before and after miscue analysis instruction are presented and discussed.